

PRESS RELEASE

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FINAL BIDDER ANNOUNCED FOR INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH BLPT

After six months of ground-breaking, innovative and extremely tough competition, NHS East of England announced today that South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) is the preferred bidder for Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT). Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is the reserve bidder.

In April this year, NHS East of England's unique commercially competitive approach to the BLPT project attracted more than 20 NHS organisations to express an interest. In June, NHS East of England invited four of the country's top NHS Foundation Trusts who had successfully pre-qualified to submit bids. Twenty four evaluators from the local NHS, Local Authorities, and service users' and carers' organisations evaluated each bid using an exacting scoring system.

The next step is a two-month external approvals and advice process. This is now underway involving the Department of Health's Transaction Board, the NHS Competition and Co-operation Panel and Monitor (the independent regulator of Foundation Trusts). Subject to the outcome of their findings, a contract will be signed with SEPT at end of November 2009.

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Dr Stephen Dunn, Director of Strategy at NHS East of England said,

“We were extremely impressed with the quality of the bids that were submitted. We are confident that South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust’s bid will secure high quality services for people living in Bedfordshire and Luton. Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust’s bid was also extremely high quality, which is why they have been designated as a reserve bidder. Both bids demonstrated strong innovation and real service improvements.

“This has been an extremely robust and transparent competitive process, where we have combined uniquely the innovative spirit of the NHS with the commercial rigour of the business world. Best of all, we have ensured that people in Bedfordshire will receive the highest quality services and the best value for taxpayers”.

Alison Davis, BLPT Trust Board Chair said,

“I am delighted that all our hard work has resulted in the choice of an excellent Foundation Trust to work with our local communities and take our mental health, learning disabilities and social care services into a bright future”.

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Notes for editors

1. Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT) provides mental health, learning disability, substance misuse and social care for the 600,000 residents of Bedfordshire and Luton. For more information on the Trust please visit www.blpt.nhs.uk
2. BLPT has made history by becoming the first NHS Trust to put itself up for merger with an established NHS organisation.
3. The process is being led by the Strategic Projects Team at NHS East of England. The team actively helps stakeholders to develop modern competitive transactions

that drive up the quality of patient experience, safety and care, clinical excellence and public service, while ensuring value for money for taxpayers.

4. A total of 21 expressions of interest were received from around the country, from which four pre-qualified to bid. These were South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust; Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust.
5. The Invitation to Tender (ITT) was published on Monday 13th July with responses being received by 24th August. These have been assessed by a broad panel of stakeholders led by NHS East of England and including BLPT, local commissioners, service users and carers and staff representatives.
6. There is now a rigorous external checking, approvals and advice process to go through before the successful bidder is confirmed at the end of November 2009. The new organisation will be launched at the beginning of April 2010.
7. The current BLPT Board will carry on running the day-to-day operation of the Trust while the process is taking place and will remain at the Trust until a suitable partner is found.

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